Extreme Weather Safety Fatality File



A tale of two workers: Heat deaths on the job provoke differing responses in Oregon, Idaho

Sebastian Francisco Perez, a 38-year-old Guatemalan immigrant, collapsed in 100-degree heat while moving irrigation lines outside at a farm and nursery in St. Paul, Oregon. Just 500 miles away, a few days later, Ian Booth, a 33-year-old Idahoan working on a landscaping crew near Lewiston, Idaho, died of cardiac arrest from heat exposure.

Perez's death in Oregon provoked quick action from Oregon's governor and lawmakers, who implemented stricter rules for employers during extreme heat, including requirements for frequent breaks, and allocated state money to a relief fund for employees who miss work because of heat illnesses or smoke.

The reaction to Booth's death in Idaho was much different, reflecting political resistance in some red states to enacting regulations to protect workers as summers get hotter, leaving them without strong state or federal protections.

Booth's family raised just over $4,500 and quietly buried him. An obituary appeared in the local newspaper, The Lewiston Tribune, but aside from loving comments on his family members' Facebook pages, Booth's death got little public attention – and no action from local lawmakers.

Source: https://www.investigatewest.org